



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

# **Ethnicity and Fertility in the Philippines**

Ma. Cecilia Gastardo-Conaco  
and  
Pilar Ramos-Jimenez

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**ETHNICITY AND FERTILITY  
IN  
THE PHILIPPINES**

by

**Ma. Cecilia Gastardo-Conaco  
and  
Pilar Ramos-Jimenez  
with the assistance of  
Ruth N. Barniego**

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MA. CECILIA GASTARDO-CONACO  
and  
PILAR RAMOS-JIMENEZ  
Senior Investigators

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## PREFACE

The Ethnicity and Fertility in Southeast Asia Project that commenced in 1980, was an outgrowth of an earlier project, Culture and Fertility in Southeast Asia, which was completed in 1979. Building upon the results of the earlier study, which established that ethnicity was a significant factor underlying the fertility differentials among the various ethnic groups in Southeast Asia, the present project aimed to explore in greater detail the extent to which ethnicity and ethnic factors like ethnic attitudes, ethnic identification and cultural practices influenced reproductive behaviour. Instead of utilizing secondary sources, the project relied on primary data collected through the survey technique. In all, twenty ethnic groups from the five ASEAN countries were surveyed in this study which spanned a total of three years.

A study involving five different countries and so many ethnic groups of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds would invariably pose problems of comparability. To maximize comparability across countries, the study relied on the use of a common core questionnaire as well as a common analytical framework and data analysis procedures. While comparability was important, the incorporation of country-specific factors salient and relevant to the explanation of fertility behaviour was also encouraged. The final research design therefore attempted to be as comprehensive as possible in the exploration of the ethnic dimension in fertility differentials among the various ethnic groups studied.

Three workshops were held during the period of the project to enable the researchers to come together to discuss and resolve problems related to the project. The first workshop was held in May 1980. At this workshop the conceptual framework and the core questionnaire were finalized. In the second workshop held in June 1981, the methods of data analysis were decided. At the



final workshop in September 1982, the country teams presented their preliminary findings. The final reports were completed by December 1983.

A study of this scale obviously also involved many researchers. The researchers were all Southeast Asian social scientists drawn from various disciplines and backgrounds. Some were attached to universities of the region while others were from research institutes or government agencies.

Dr Rodolfo A. Bulatao from the East-West Population Institute provided the initial intellectual impetus to the project by formulating the conceptual framework and research design for the study as well as the drafting of the preliminary questionnaire. In addition Dr Bulatao together with Dr Aline K. Wong from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Dr Ng Shui Meng from ISEAS served as co-ordinators of the project. The country teams consisted of:

Indonesia: Dr Mely Tan (National Institute of Economic and Social Research of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, LEKNAS-LIPI)

Dr Budi Soeradji (Central Bureau of Statistics)

Mr Amri Marzali (Faculty of Letters, University of Indonesia)

Malaysia: Datin Dr Noor Lailly Abu Bakar (Malaysia National Family Planning Board, NFPB)

Dr Tan Boon Ann (NFPB)

Mr Tey Nai Peng (NFPB)

Mr Hew Wai Sin (NFPB)

Ms Aminah Abdul Rahman (NFPB)

Ms Ramlah Haji Muda (NFPB)

Ms Nazileh Ramli (NFPB)

Mr Khalipah Mohd Tora (NFPB)

Mr Ng Tuck Seng (NFPB)

Philippines: Ms Pilar Ramos-Jimenez (Philippine Social Science Council, PSSC)

Ms Ma. Cecilia Gastardo-Conaco (University of the Philippines)

Ms Lorna Makil (PSSC)

Ms Ruth N. Barniego (PSSC)

Singapore: Dr Eddie C.Y. Kuo (National University of Singapore, NUS)

Dr Chiew Seen-Kong (NUS)

Thailand: Dr Suchart Prasithrathsint (National Institute of Development Administration, NIDA)

Dr Suwanlee Piampiti (NIDA)

Mr Thawatchai Arthorn-thurasook  
(Mahidol University)

Dr Laddawan Rodmanee (Mahidol University)

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Ms Suranya Bunnag (Prince of Songkla University)

Ms Amporn Chareonchai (Khon Kaen University)

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The results of the study are being published in six monographs in this series:

Ethnicity and Fertility in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Analysis

Ethnicity and Fertility in Indonesia

Ethnicity and Fertility in Malaysia

Ethnicity and Fertility in the Philippines

Ethnicity and Fertility in Singapore

Ethnicity and Fertility in Thailand

ALINE WONG and NG SHUI MENG  
Project Co-ordinators  
and  
General Editors of the Series

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of this project is to investigate through a field survey, the nature and causes of fertility differentials among five ethnic groups in the Philippines. This study is part of a cross-national research on ethnic differentials in fertility involving the five member countries of ASEAN.

The specific objectives of this research are: (1) to provide a systematic description of ethnic differentials in fertility and associated cultural practices in the Philippines for the comparative analysis among the five ASEAN countries; (2) to attempt to explain the differentials within a multivariate framework; (3) to assess the role of fertility differentials in perceptions of ethnic relations; and (4) to suggest policies for dealing with ethnic differentials.

The ethnic groups covered in this survey are the Bicolanos, Ilocanos, Tagalogs, Maranaos and Chinese. There were 2,301 respondents from both the urban and rural areas, distributed as follows: 494 Bicolanos, 500 Ilocanos, 499 Tagalogs, 499 Maranaos, and 309 Chinese.

A comparative interview schedule with 195 questions served as the main research instrument covering three areas: ethnic identification, ethnic attitudes, and cultural practices affecting fertility. A comparative codebook was also utilized for the processing of data. The programmes found in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) were employed in most of the analysis.

The statistical tool used for the multivariate analysis is the multiple classification analysis (MCA). Three dependent variables, namely, children ever born, recent fertility, and the use of effective contraceptive usage were studied using 21 predictors of which 13 were factors and 8 were covariates.

A major finding from the multivariate analysis is the impact of ethnicity on the three dependent variables. The MCA showed ethnicity to be a significant and consistently important predictor. Its impact, however, diminished when other factors in the various explanatory models were considered. The effects of gender balance and child mortality experience on the dependent fertility variables (children ever born and recent fertility), months breast-feeding on children ever born, and access to contraception on the use of effective contraceptive methods were found to lessen the net importance of ethnicity. This would seem to indicate that the impact of ethnicity is influenced by the differential opportunities and experience of the ethnic groups. Thus it might be worthwhile exploring the notion of ethnicity further and how it exactly affects fertility.

Another major finding shows the Christian lowland groups (the Bicolanos, Tagalogs, and Ilocanos) as having similarities in their fertility behaviour patterns while the Maranaos and the Chinese appear as distinct groups. The Chinese seems to have the most advantaged position not only in socio-economic terms but also in their access to contraceptives and other services. The Maranaos' poor access to health care and other social services is largely due to its peripheral position -- both physically and institutionally -- in Philippine society. This current state of affairs among the Maranaos necessitates a more vigorous and concerned intervention by health and population personnel. The provision of health and family planning services, however, should take into consideration the cultural and institutional factors peculiar to this group. While more assistance is desired for the Maranaos, the provision of health and family planning services to the other groups should also be sustained and enhanced. Although most of the non-Muslim groups know of and do practise family planning, a considerable proportion from the rural areas (particularly the Ilocanos and Bicolanos) have not availed of any form of family planning methods.

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